

# Indiana House of Representatives

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## News and Information

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### **PELATH ON GOVERNMENT REFORM: SOME GOOD, SOME BAD**

INDIANAPOLIS – As a member of the House Government and Regulatory Reform Committee, State Rep. Scott Pelath (D-Michigan City) said today he supports new restrictions on state legislators becoming registered lobbyists, but has concerns about plans to eliminate hundreds of citizen boards and commissions.

Pelath and other members of the newly-formed panel passed House Bill 1090, which would prohibit lawmakers from becoming paid lobbyists until they have left the Indiana General Assembly for one year.

"The revolving door of legislators becoming lobbyists rotates a tad too freely," said Pelath. "The public should be confident that their elected representatives do not advocate issues simply because they have a job waiting for them in the lobbying community."

Pelath said a similar ban also may soon apply to officials in the governor's administration. Such a measure, which is backed by Gov. Mitch Daniels, is expected to be heard in the Government Reform Committee next week.

"I have never questioned the integrity or motives of any individual lawmaker or administration official who became a lobbyist, but I think the public is uncomfortable with the practice," he said. "A cooling-off period makes sense."

Pelath was less supportive, however, of House Bill 1188, which would give the governor unrestricted authority to eliminate hundreds of citizen boards and commission throughout Indiana. Concerns voiced by Pelath and others on the Government Reform panel caused action on the bill to be delayed.

"I agree that we probably can live without a State Egg Board, but many of these commissions are important for ensuring citizen participation in our government," said Pelath. "They often were created at the urging of a group of citizens and taxpayers, and the power to silence their input should not rest in one man's hands."

Pelath added that state boards and commissions are primarily comprised of private Indiana citizens, many of whom serve on a purely voluntary basis. If eliminated, a panel's powers and duties would be transferred to the governor.

Among the groups that HB 1188 would place on the governor's chopping block are the Community Child Protection Team, the Commission for a Drug Free Indiana, Indiana State Board of Education, the Great Lakes Commission, the Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs, the Commission on Social Status of Black Males, the Kids First Trust Fund Board, the Lake Michigan Marine Development Commission, the Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission, the Utility Consumer Counselor Advisory Council and the Property Tax Replacement Fund Board.

"If a commission has outlived its usefulness, then we should get rid of it," Pelath said. "But these boards were created after deliberation and should be disbanded only after deliberation, not simply because someone might view them as a nuisance."